

*Santa Fe, NM – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico’s Third District sent the following letter to National Nuclear Security Administration Administrator Thomas D’Agostino regarding the recently announced plan to reduce the workforce at Los Alamos National Laboratory.□*

*Luján encourages the Administrator to “collaborate with the laboratory and the Administration to prevent the loss of these vital LANL employees.” If a workforce reduction cannot be reconsidered, Luján also urges severance packages for voluntarily separating employees that reflect their important contributions to LANL and that provide support for those using their expertise to pursue start-up ventures.*

*Below is the text of the letter:*

February, 23, 2012

Thomas P. D’Agostino  
Under Secretary for Nuclear Security and Administrator National Nuclear Security  
Administration  
1000 Independence Avenue, Southwest  
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Administrator D’Agostino,

Los Alamos National Laboratory in Northern New Mexico occupies a preeminent position in the history of our nation’s efforts to maintain our national security and advance the causes of science and education. Historically, our nation has reaped enormous benefits from the federal government’s commitment to scientific research and the many innovations, businesses, and jobs that have been created as a result. As I have discussed with you on a number of

occasions since taking office as a Member of Congress, I strongly believe that the work of our national laboratories to develop new technologies and solutions could be harnessed to create new industries and economic development in New Mexico and throughout the nation. As President Obama said in last month's State of the Union address:

"Today, the discoveries taking place in our federally-financed labs and universities could lead to new treatments that kill cancer cells but leave healthy ones untouched. New lightweight vests for cops and soldiers that can stop any bullet. Don't gut these investments in our budget. Don't let other countries win the race for the future. Support the same kind of research and innovation that led to the computer chip and the Internet; to new American jobs and new American industries."

I agree with the President's sentiments and was concerned by the Administration's cuts to LANL in the FY2013 budget request and the subsequent announcement that the lab would need to reduce its workforce by up to 800 employees. This reduction in LANL's workforce will be a permanent loss to the lab and the nation's intellectual capital. The federal government has invested millions of dollars into the education, training, and certification of these employees with the intent that their work would make our nation safer, our economy stronger, and our scientific knowledge more robust. The departure of these employees at a time of economic and geopolitical instability is counterproductive and unwise. I strongly urge you to collaborate with the laboratory and the Administration to prevent the loss of these vital LANL employees.

Should you be unable to reconsider the lab's workforce reduction, please consider the lab's role in its surrounding region. LANL is more than just the largest employer in Northern New Mexico, it is one of the fundamental supports for the region's economy and social institutions, contributing more than \$2 billion to New Mexico's economy. The impacts of the lab and its thousands of employees, contractors, and students are felt throughout the state and shape New Mexico's businesses, schools, governments, and people. As severance packages for voluntarily departing employees are devised, please be cognizant of the following considerations: First, many lab employees have worked for the lab and our nation's national security enterprise for decades and deserve to be compensated for their loyal service. Severance packages for voluntary separation must recognize these workers' allegiance to the lab's work by honoring the lab's full pension benefit and offering the most fair, generous and attractive severance possible. Second, these employees have built up a vast technological expertise that could have broader applications to new business ventures or employment opportunities. In addition to the financial elements of the package, I urge you to work in coordination with the lab and the Department of Energy Tech Transfer Coordinator to provide incentives and support for lab employees who plan to leave the lab and initiate new start up businesses.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to support New Mexico's national laboratories and their workforce. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Ben Ray Luján  
Member of Congress

Cc: Charles McMillan, Director, Los Alamos National Laboratory

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